

Lehi's United Order of Enoch

By John K. Haws Jr.

When I was a teenage boy living in Lehi, Glen Smith was involved in a production of “ The Order is Love”. It was a musical written by Carol Lynn Pearson and Lex de Azevedo based on the United Order. It was one of the first times performed and included a Utah County cast. It was performed at the amphitheatre of Glen Smith's which was north of the Cemetery in Lehi. I was invited to participate in the cast, but had a month trip with my parents to Washington D.C. and could not meet the practice requirements.

I remember going to the play. I sat alone in a corner, because most of my friends were in the play. It was a beautiful night and up there you felt like you were in nature. The production was great, but I didn't like the subject. It was alarming to me and I wondered what it was really like to live in such a society and I could see myself being the weakest link.

Recently through some recent inquiries, I began thinking, reading and studying about Lehi's United Order experience. When the Saints came to the west, it was to escape the world and enter into a community society and all Saints were encouraged to come to Zion. Mormon Currency and Mormon Alphabets were set up to encourage the new Mormon society.

The members of the Church were chosen to go and choose the west. Brigham Young would get up in General Conference and read a list of brethren that had been called to settle different parts of the west. The next day that family would load up and move to where they had been called.

Many of the faithful members of the Church in Lehi, after a time was called to settle throughout Utah and Idaho. Bishop David Evan's went through so many counselors in the Bishopric. After he trained them, they would be called to move on and be called to be Bishops and settlers of Cache County, Richfield, Beaver and

many parts of Idaho. Lehi was the training academy for how to set up pioneer community life and the west was settled because of the leadership from men like Canute Peterson, John Murdock, David Savage, the Peterson, the Loveridges and the Hatchs.

Brigham Young was uneasy about all the changes that were coming to the Utah Territory. The Railroads were springing up and miners, non-mormon businesses and others were coming in and causing concern about the Mormon economics.

In 1873, the United States had a national economic scare or panic. The Mormon economy was surprisingly more dependent on the national economics than the Church had previously thought. The State of Utah and especially the City of Lehi had become more dependent on well-being of the mining industry and the railroad industry. This panic caused problems in Utah as it did in the other areas of the United States. Lehi's history says that "Utah mines closed, banks failed, people hoarded cash, consumer spending dropped and unemployment skyrocketed in the financial depression that ensued."¹

The Brigham Young expedition for his annual visit to St. George, became the stopping point for instigating the setting up the United Order of Enoch. Brigham Young was inspired by the towns of Lehi and Brigham City's efforts to set up Co-operatives. In 1853-57, Israel Evans served an LDS mission in England. While there he visited an early co-operative in Rochdale, England. There he learned how a co-operative works. When he returned, he explained the idea to his father David Evans. His father encouraged him and they felt that the Co-operative idea would work in Lehi.

In 1868, Israel Evans with the power of Bishop David Evans, established and capitalized the Lehi Union Exchange. It was owned by the Mormon Church in Lehi. The people could exchange their produce for store goods. The Lehi Union Exchange was so successful, it ran most of the other merchants out of business.

¹ Van Wagoner, Richard. *Lehi-Portrait of Utah Town*. 1990. page 11.

This caused a lot of anger among Lehi merchants like the Taylor brothers and James T. Harwood. The Lehi Union Exchange was located in the spot of Colonial House at 181-189 West Main.

Brigham Young spotlighted the Lehi Union Exchange in his 07April 1869 General Conference talk. This was the beginning of the ZCMI movement. Colonial House has a plaque honoring the first ZCMI in Utah.

In the Utah History Encyclopedia, we read “In 1868, Brigham Young founded Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution, a church-sponsored retail trading system that he hoped would drive out non-Mormon merchants and be profitable enough to provide the capital needed to foster local cooperative industries. With the Salt Lake City ZCMI as a central wholesaling facility, Young encouraged the establishment of some 150 retail branches in almost every Mormon town and village.”²

Lehi established and organized their United Order on 28 April, 1874. Wilford Woodruff, Erastus Snow, Abraham O. Smoot, and Angus M. Cannon presided from the LDS church apostles as the United Order was set up.³

Lehi Officers were David Evans, President; William W. Winn and William Goates, Vice-President; Thomas R. Cutler, Secretary; Isaac Goodwin, Treasurer; and James W. Taylor, William Bone, and William Gurney; directors.⁴

Lehi citizens and all those who entered the United Order of Enoch were required to be rebaptized to enter the order. The following rules of conduct were drawn up for those who entered the order:

“We will not take the name of Deity in vain, nor speak lightly of his character, or of sacred things. We will pray with our families morning and evening and also attend to secret prayer. We will observe and keep the Word of Wisdom, according to the spirit and the meaning thereof. We will treat our families with due kindness and affection, and set before them an

² May, Dean L. *Utah History Encyclopedia*. “United Order Movement”.

³ Van Wagoner, Richard. *Lehi-Portrait of Utah Town*. 1990. page 11.

⁴ Journal History 22 November 1887.

*example worthy of imitation. In our families and intercourse with all persons, we will refrain from being contentious or quarrelsome, and we will cease to speak evil of each other, and will cultivate a spirit of charity towards all. We consider it our duty to keep from acting selfishly or from covetous motives, and will seek the interest of each other and the salvation of all mankind. We will observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, in accordance with the revelations. . . . In our apparel and deportment we will not pattern after nor encourage foolish and extravagant fashions. . . . We will be simple in our dress and manner of living, using proper economy and prudence in the management of all entrusted to our care. . . . We will honestly and diligently labor and devote ourselves and all we have to the "order" and to the building of the kingdom of God."*⁵

The church printed broadsides of the "Rules...of the United Order," which were posted in ward meetinghouses, committing members to general moral reform as well as to living the communal order. The orders were posted in the Lehi Meeting House.⁶

Lehi's United Order, like those elsewhere, did not require members to consecrate all their property and labor to the group. William Yates wrote that two-thirds of Lehi "gave in their money to join the order."⁷ J. Reuben Clark said, "The fundamental principle of [the United Order] was the private ownership of property. Each man owned his portion, or inheritance, or stewardship, with an absolute title, which he could alienate, or hypothecate, or otherwise treat as his own. The Church did not own all of the property, and the life under the United Order was not a communal life, as the Prophet Joseph, himself said. The United Order is an individualistic system, not a communal system".⁸

Lehi's United Order consisted of three major components of communal operations:

1. Molasses Mill. It was built on the Northwest corner of Center and Sixth North. It was powered by a wood water wheel from the Lehi Ditch.
2. Lehi Union Exchange. This cooperative was already in place at the time of the United Order. In fact, a lot of Brigham Young's ideas came from this movement.

⁵ *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 4:485–86

⁶ May, Dean L. *Utah History Encyclopedia*. "United Order Movement".

⁷ William Yates Personal Diary.

⁸ LDS Conference Report Oct. 19:12 Page 55

3. Dairy and Cattle Industry. The Big Field was a community livestock enclosure in the southwestern part of town surrounded by 1,731 rods of mud fence. It was set up by the Lehi City while Bishop Evans was mayor. This communal industry was expanded under the United Order.

Like most United Order experiences, Lehi experienced minimal success. At the end there started to be many disputes and division over the problems. Bishop David Evans and his son Israel were being attacked from many important citizens on the handling of the Order. One of the Taylor brothers decked Bishop Evans on Main Street. James Harwood was excommunicated for his opposition. Israel Evan's supposedly abuse at the Big Field caused a battle between Evans and Porter Rockwell. Rockwell went directly to Brigham Young over the handling of the United Order. Apostles Franklin D. Richards and Joseph F. Smith came to Lehi to try to settle the strife. David Evans resigned, and Thomas R. Cutler took over which settled a lot of the turmoil.⁹

The Lehi Union Exchange went out of business in Lehi and in 1880 was purchased by the People's Cooperative which thrived for another 50 years. The United Order success in Lehi came mainly from the strength and strong leadership of Bishop Evans and his son Israel. Israel Evans was the author behind the cooperative movement in Utah. Just like the theme of the musical produced in Lehi, when the love left, the United Order died.

⁹ Van Wagoner, Richard. *Lehi-Portrait of Utah Town*. 1990. page 12.